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TAGS: [SENV](#) [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [KGHG](#) [KSCA](#) [KS](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH KOREAN VIEWS ON MAJOR ECONOMIES' MEETING AND  
NEXT STEPS

REF: SECSTATE 140075

Classified By: EMIN ANDREW QUINN, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A member of the South Korean delegation to the September 27-28 Major Economies' Meeting (MEM) opined that a successful outcome for the MEM process depends, in large part, on 1) limiting the scope and ambition of the process, and 2) bypassing France's offer to host the second meeting. He seemed to be looking for ways to help the U.S. chart a path to success (rather than hoping to clip the wings of the initiative), and concluded in a sympathetic tone that the U.S. initiative faces a tough period ahead. End summary.

12. (U) ESTH Chief met October 12 with Kim Chan-woo, Senior Coordinator for Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), to obtain Korean perceptions of the MEM. Kim was part of the Korean delegation to the MEM, led by Foreign Minister Song Min-soon.

13. (C) Kim observed that the conflicting interests (particularly between developing and developed countries) seen in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process were on display in the MEM. Particularly in view of the MEM's ambitious timetable (including the target of holding a leaders' meeting in 2008), Kim asserted, the question arises whether the level of ambition in the U.S. vision for the MEM process is realistic. The prospects for achieving a consensus among the disparate MEM participants depend on holding the level of ambition low enough to make consensus feasible. For example, he said that it was not entirely clear to all participants whether the proposed interim national targets would be completely voluntary, or whether the U.S. envisioned a process of comparing, coordinating and massaging those targets. (His implicit conclusion was that the latter would not fly.) When

ESTH Chief referred to the U.S. concept of "pledge and review" of voluntary targets, Kim responded that he wasn't sure that even "pledge and review" was feasible.

¶4. (C) Kim noted that numerous participants had argued that some of the subjects broached by the MEM were of strong interest to countries not represented. He mentioned specifically adaptation and conservation of tropical forests. He suggested that leaving those subjects to other processes might improve the odds of consensus within the MEM.

¶5. (C) Describing France's offer to host the second meeting as a major hurdle to progress, Kim asserted that finding a diplomatic way around that will be key. The first meeting did not fully lay the groundwork for a successful MEM process, and the second meeting will be crucial, he contended.

¶6. (C) One indicator of the mixed response to the U.S. initiative, Kim indicated, was that according to his information fewer than 10 of the attending economies had submitted the requested matrices of actions already under way. He confirmed that Korea had submitted its matrix.

¶7. (C) Asked about Korea's response to the President's proposal for an international technology fund, Kim said that Korea had not had an opportunity to examine it in depth yet and looked forward to hearing details.

¶8. (C) ESTH Chief also asked Kim how to interpret reports that Korea had taken the position that it should be treated as a developing country ("equivalent to Bangladesh?") in terms of climate change commitments. Kim recalled that that has been a consistent Korean position, including in the terms

it negotiated for accession to the OECD in 1996. That said, he noted that the Korean press is increasingly focusing on climate change, and public understanding of the issue is growing. Most ministries accept that Korea will have to adopt policies to curb emissions. He implied that the traditional Korean position will not be the last word as international efforts evolve.

¶9. (C) COMMENT: Kim concluded, sympathetically, that the United States, as initiator and leader of the MEM process, faces a very tough period ahead. His comments about limiting the ambition of the project seemed to reflect the views of a partner struggling to help chart a path toward success rather than of someone hoping to clip the wings of the initiative. End comment.  
STANTON